

Mardi Gras

Party Packet



This packet contains:

History of Mardi Gras

Activities for Kids

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Sample Invitations & Recipes

History of Mardi Gras



Mardi Gras came to New Orleans through its French heritage in 1699. Early explorers celebrated this French Holiday on the banks of the Mississippi River. Throughout the years, Orleanians have added to the celebration by establishing **krewes** (organizations) which host parades and balls. Carnival quickly became an exciting holiday for both children and adults.

Carnival refers to the season of revelry before Mardi Gras. It begins officially on January 6, which is known as Twelfth Night or Kings' Day, so named because it falls 12 days after Christmas on the day the Wise Men are said to have reached Bethlehem.

Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday." Traditionally it is the last day for Christians to indulge — and often overindulge — before Ash Wednesday starts the sober weeks of fasting that come with Lent. Formally known as *Shrove Tuesday*, Mardi Gras has long been a time of extravagant fun for European Christians. Mardi Gras always falls on the Tuesday that is 46 days before Easter Sunday. It is always the day before Ash Wednesday.

The official colors for Mardi Gras are purple, green and gold. These colors were chosen in 1872 by the King of Carnival, Rex. He chose these colors to stand for the following:

- **Purple represents justice**
- **Green stands for faith**
- **Gold stands for power**



The Mardi Gras season begins about two weeks before Fat Tuesday. During those two weeks, parades can be viewed nightly and on weekends. Almost all businesses are closed for Lundi Gras (Fat Monday) and for Mardi Gras itself. People all over the world travel to New Orleans to enjoy this extravagant holiday.

The millions of colorful beaded necklaces thrown from floats are the most visible symbols and souvenirs of Mardi Gras. In addition, millions of cups and toy coins known as "doubloons" are decorated with krewe logos and thrown to parade-watchers.

The one ubiquitous food of the Carnival season is the king cake. Sweet roll-like dough is shaped into a big circle, cooked and brushed with purple, green and gold sugar or icing. Then a plastic baby, representing the Christ child, is tucked inside. Whoever gets the piece of cake containing the baby must, by tradition, provide the next king cake. Nowadays, king cakes come with a variety of fillings from chocolate to pineapple.

Mardi Gras Party Ideas

Invitation Ideas:

- Attach the invitations to elegantly decorated masks
- Along with each, send a plain half-mask for each guest to decorate
- Include trinkets and coins in each envelope

Dress Options:

- New Orleans themed costumes: fortune teller, a jester, a jazz band player or even a swamp thing!
- Any costume as long as it is worn with a mask
- Wear Mardi Gras beads, derby hats, top hats, green glow necklaces



Décor:

- Gold, green and purple colors
- Balloons, streamers, confetti
- Street signs, that are unique to the French Quarter such as Bourbon Street and Jackson Square, and street lamps from prop houses
- Posters and paintings depicting Mardi Gras locale and themes
- Ornate masks
- Costume jewelry, crowns, scepters, capes, and other royal trappings
- Musical instruments and other decorations with a music theme
- Make sure you have plenty of Mardi Gras beads, cups, and doubloons on hand to add to the decorative flair of the house and to give to your guests
- Centerpieces are easy to design with your choice of colorful feather masks surrounding a bunch of purple, green and yellow balloons.
- Play New Orleans jazz or Cajun and zydeco music to get your guests into the carnival spirit (New Orleans jazz artists include: Pete Fountain, Al Hirt, Louis Armstrong, The Neville Brothers. Cajun & zydeco artists include: Beausoleil, Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys, Zachary Richard, Chubby Carrier and the Bayou Swamp Band, Buckwheat Zydeco, just to name a few)
- Create the feel of a New Orleans courtyard or bayou eatery. If outside, wind white icicle lights around the trees, string them in the bushes, and hang them on the fence. If inside, fasten them to houseplants, to the top of a window frame and string them across the ceiling.
- Votive candles set in Mason jars or old-fashioned glasses half filled with sand will add to the feel of casual elegance.



Mardi Gras Party Ideas...

Refreshments:

Anything that had traditional Cajun flavors: celery seed, onion, garlic, cayenne pepper, black pepper, and salt. For the uninitiated Cajun cook, packaged seasonings offer authentic flavor and are available at most grocery stores. Have plenty of hot sauces on hand, such as Louisiana Gold or Tabasco. (Don't forget to wash your hands after handling spices. If you've ever cooked Cajun and then rubbed your eyes, you won't ever have to be reminded again!)

- Shrimp creole
- Jambalaya
- Dirty Rice (red beans and rice)
- Seafood stuffed artichoke
- Marinated Crab Claws
- Boiled Shrimp
- Orange-coconut ambrosia
- French bread
- Pecan pie
- Bread pudding or praline sauce served over French vanilla ice cream
- Rice and fruit pudding
- Festive drinks, New Orleans punch
- And last, but not least, **King Cake** for desert!
- or, have a pancake party!

Activities:

- Attend a jazz band concert or any other open-air band performance
- State or attend a grand parade
- Crown best-costume winners to reign as royalty during the party
- Organize food-tasting contests
- Have the kids make floats out of shoe boxes and have a parade

Prizes/Favors:

- Trinkets traditionally tossed about at the Mardi Gras Parade: costume jewelry, silk scarves, and candy
- Chocolate coins in small treasure chests
- Instant photos of costumed guests



Mardi Gras Crafts



Mini Mardi Gras Floats

Shoe box (lid optional)
Green tissue paper or aluminum foil
Acrylic paints
Tape/Stapler
Paint brushes
Beads
Doubloons

Glitter
Jester Doll
Scissors
Glue
Misc. goodies: critters, figures, small dolls, small toys, candy, confetti



Think of a theme such as "Barbie goes to Hollywood!" or "Poseidon's Undersea Adventure." Your theme will dictate how your float looks, and the materials you will need.

Paint the outside of the box or cover it with tissue paper or aluminum foil. You don't need to cover the inside of the box. Attach lid to box if you have a lid.

Now you are ready to decorate! You can write your theme on the side of the box in glitter, or hang ribbons off the sides, etc.

Be creative in how you decorate your float.

Mardi Gras Masks

Paper Plate
Ribbon
Acrylic paints
Paint brushes
Scissors
Hole punch
Glue
Misc. goodies: glitter, feathers, sparkly things, etc.

Cut plate in half; cut decorative edging around outside edge of plate. Paint plate, let dry. Cut holes for eyes. Using a hole punch, punch a hole on each side to thread the ribbon through when tying the mask on.

Decorate mask with whatever you have around the house. Be creative! Glue or staple lots of ribbons around the edges, or make animal faces. Make swirly designs using glue, then pour glitter over the glue and shake the excess off.

When everything is dry tie ribbons through the holes you punched earlier. Make sure the ribbon is long enough to tie a bow around your head.



Make your own Mardi Gras Mask!

Masks are the mainstays of the Mardi Gras gala. From fancy dress balls to street parades and nightly parties, masks of all sizes, shapes, colors, and variety adorn the celebration.

Venetian Mask

You will need:

Colored card
Pencil
Glittery chenille stems (also known as pipe cleaners)
Crepe paper
Adhesive stars
Wooden skewer or garden stick
PVA glue and brush
Glue stick
Scissors
Pair of glasses, preferable eye-shaped ones, or mask pattern
Paper doily



Place a pair of glasses on the card and draw around them with a pencil. Or use a mask template pattern and outline the template. Add to your outline the fancy curves on both sides of the mask. Cut out the card with scissors.

Apply glue to the front of the card with the brush and place a large piece of crepe paper on top. Smooth out the crepe paper. When the glue is dry, trim around the edges with scissors.

Fold the paper doily in half and cut out the semi-circle in the middle. Unfold the doily and cut in half following the fold line. Please one half of the doily so that it looks like a fan.

Glue the other half of the doily to the front of the mask with paper glue. The cut out semi-circle should be at the top of the mask. Draw eye holes on to the front of the mask, then cut them out.

Stick colored paper or foil stars around the upper and outer edge of the mask. Ask an adult to trim any sharp ends from the wooden skewer or garden stick. Tightly wind chenille stems around the skewer to cover it completely. Fix the skewer to the back of the mask with PVA glue and leave to dry thoroughly.

Cut a rectangle of crepe paper and wind a chenille stem around the middle to make a bow. Glue the bow on the mask as shown. Allow to dry.

You could add sequins and glitter, or even paint the doily gold to match the Carnival colors. You can really let your imagination run wild when decorating your Venetian Mask. The Venetians certainly do when designing their masks for the Carnival.



Mazed™ "Mardi Gras"

by Isaac Thayer



Mardi Gras Recipes



Mardi Gras King Cake

Pastry:

1 cup milk
1/4 cup butter
2 (.25 ounce) packages active dry yeast
2/3 cup warm water (110 degrees)
1/2 cup white sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
5 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

Filling:

1 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon cinnamon
2/3 cup chopped pecans
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup melted butter

Frosting:

1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon water

Scald milk, remove from heat and stir in 1/4 cup of butter. Allow mixture to cool to room temperature. In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in the warm water with 1 tablespoon of the white sugar. Let stand until creamy, about 10 minutes.

When yeast mixture is bubbling, add the cooled milk mixture. Whisk in the eggs. Stir in the remaining white sugar, salt and nutmeg. Beat the flour into the milk/egg mixture 1 cup at a time. When the dough has pulled together, turn it out into a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Lightly oil a large bowl, place the dough in the bowl and turn to coat with oil. Cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in volume; about 2 hours. When risen, punch down and divide dough in half.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Grease 2 cookie sheets or line with parchment paper.

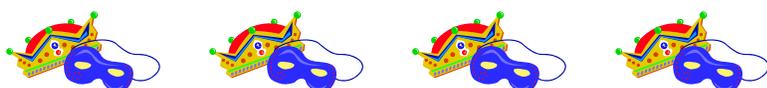
To make filling: Combine the brown sugar, ground cinnamon, chopped pecans, 1/2 cup flour and 1/2 cup raisins. Pour 1/2 cup melted butter over the cinnamon mixture and mix until crumbly.

Roll dough halves out into large rectangles (approximately 10x16 inches). Sprinkle the filling evenly over the dough and roll up each half tightly like a jelly roll, beginning at the wide side. Bring the ends of each roll together to form 2 oval shaped rings. Place each ring on a prepared cookie sheet. With scissors make cuts 1/3 of the way through the rings at 1 inch intervals. Let rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 45 minutes.

Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes. Push the doll into the bottom of the cake. Frost while warm with the confectioner's sugar blended with 1 to 2 tablespoons of water.

Sprinkle with purple, green and gold sugar, or decorate with whole pecans and candied cherries.

Note: be sure to tell everyone to inspect their piece of cake before they begin eating to avoid swallowing the plastic doll. To be extra careful, use a plastic toy baby that is too large to swallow, or hide an orange wedge or 3-4 pecan halves inside the cake. Avoid items that may hurt someone's teeth. Place the honorable baby outside on the top of the cake for all to see and adore!



Mardi Gras Recipes



Bignets (Creole Doughnuts)

1/2 cup boiling water
2 Tbsp. shortening
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup evaporated milk
1/2 package yeast
1/4 cup warm water
1 egg, beaten
3 3/4 cups sifted flour (approximately)
Confectioners sugar

Pour boiling water over shortening, sugar and salt. Add milk and let stand until warm. Dissolve yeast in warm water and add to milk mixture with the beaten egg. Stir in 2 cups flour. Add enough flour to make a soft dough. Place in greased bowl; grease top of dough and cover with waxed paper and a cloth. Chill until ready to use.

Roll dough to 1/8 inch thickness. Do not let dough rise before frying. Cut into squares and fry, a few at a time, in deep hot fat (360 degrees F). Brown on one side, turn and brown on other. Drain on absorbent paper. Sprinkle with confectioners sugar.

Yields 2 1/2 dozen.



Mulled Cider

2 quarts apple cider
2/3 cup brown sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
6 whole cloves
6 whole allspice (or 1 tsp. ground)
4 sticks cinnamon

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Place over low heat. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, simmer 5 minutes. Strain. Serve hot. Can add cinnamon stick as garnish.

Mardi Gras Recipes



Cajun Cake

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups white sugar
2 teaspoons baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1 (20 ounce) can crushed pineapple with juice

3/4 cup white sugar
3/4 cup evaporated milk
1/2 pound butter
1 cup chopped pecans
1 1/2 cups flaked coconut

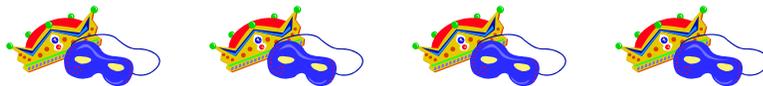
Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour a 9x13 inch pan.

In a large bowl, sift together flour, 1 1/2 cup sugar, salt and baking soda. Add eggs, pineapple and juice. Mix at low speed until well blended.

Pour batter into prepared 9x13 inch pan and bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until done. Have topping ready when cake is done.

To Make Topping: In a saucepan, combine milk, 3/4 cup sugar and butter. Bring to a boil and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add pecans and coconut and combine. Remove from heat.

When cake comes out of the oven, pour on the topping and carefully spread on while cake is still hot.



Mardi Gras Recipes



Catfish Creole

2 cups water
1 cup uncooked long-grain rice
1 pound catfish filets
1 (16 ounce) can stewed tomatoes, with liquid
2 teaspoons dried minced onion
1 teaspoon chicken bouillon granules
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/8 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

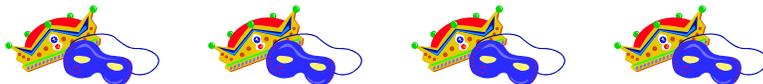
In a small saucepan, bring the 2 cups of water to a boil. Stir in the rice and return to a boil; reduce the heat. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until the rice is tender and the water absorbed.

Using a very sharp knife, cut the catfish into 3/4 inch pieces; set aside. In a medium saucepan, combine the tomatoes (with juices), dried onions, bouillon granules, dried oregano, garlic powder, and hot-pepper sauce; bring to a boil and stir in the catfish pieces.

Cover and cook over medium heat for 5 to 8 minutes or until the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork and is opaque all the way through.

Serve the fish mixture over the rice.

Serves 4.



Hush Puppies

2 quarts vegetable oil for frying
3 cups cornmeal
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 1/2 cups milk
1/2 cup water
1 egg, beaten
1 small onion, minced

Heat vegetable oil to 365 degrees F. In a large mixing bowl, combine corn meal, baking powder, salt, milk, and water. Mix in egg and chopped onion. Shape the batter into small balls, approximately 1 tablespoon each.

Use a long handled spoon to gently slide the hush puppies into the hot oil. Cook 8 or 10 at a time, until golden brown. Remove from the oil with a slotted spoon, and roll on paper towels to briefly drain. Serve Hot.

Makes 2 dozen.

Mardi Gras Recipes



New Orleans Jambalaya

1 cup soy sauce
4 tablespoons dried thyme
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons paprika
2 onions, chopped
2 tablespoons ground black pepper
16 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
3/4 pound bacon, cut into small pieces
8 onions, diced
4 cloves minced garlic
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
3 pounds chorizo, sliced into chunks
3 pounds cooked ham, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
3 tablespoons dried thyme
4 teaspoons cayenne pepper
5 cups chicken stock
6 (14.5 ounce) cans peeled and diced tomatoes with juice
1 green bell pepper, chopped
6 cups uncooked white rice
10 pounds medium shrimp — peeled and deveined

Chicken Marinade: In a large, shallow glass baking dish, mix together soy sauce, 4 tablespoons dried thyme, 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, 2 tablespoons paprika, 2 chopped onions and 2 tablespoons black pepper. Place the chicken in the marinade. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours.

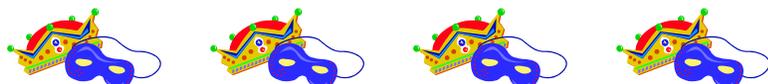
Saute bacon in a dutch oven over medium heat until brown. Add the onion and garlic. Continue to cook 5 minutes. Mix in flour and sausage. Cook 5 minutes more; stirring frequently. Add the ham, thyme, cayenne, chicken stock, tomatoes, reserved juice and green pepper and bring to a boil. Stir in rice and cover. Cook for 25 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely and refrigerate.

Two hours before you intend to serve the jambalaya, discard marinade and bake chicken breasts at 500 degrees F for 12 minutes, or until the flesh is firm when pressed with finger. Remove from oven. Cool and slice into bite-size pieces.

Reduce oven's temperature to 250 degrees F. Place covered jambalaya pot on large baking tray filled with hot water. Bake until warm, about 2 hours.

Just before serving the jambalaya, boil 5 quarts of water. Add the shrimp and cook for 3 minutes until they are firm to the touch. Drain well. Toss shrimp and chicken with jambalaya mixture and serve.

Makes 15 servings.



Mardi Gras Recipes



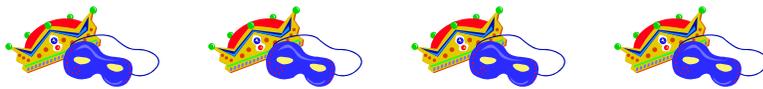
Cajun Chicken Mustard

6 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons spicy Cajun seasoning, divided
2 cups seasoned bread crumbs
1 pound chicken tenderloins
1 cup vegetable oil
2 cups milk
4 ounces butter
1 jar Dijon mustard

Add the Cajun seasonings (6 tbsp.) to the bread crumbs and toss the chicken tenders in the mix to coat well. Heat the oil until bread crumbs fry when sprinkled in. Fry the chicken until golden brown, about 1 minute.

Bring the milk and the butter to a rapid boil, whisk in the mustard and heat through. Add the chicken to the sauce and warm through, sprinkle with 2 teaspoons of Cajun seasoning and serve.

Makes 4 servings.



Creole BBQ Shrimp

4 tablespoons butter unsalted
4 tablespoons peanut oil
2 tablespoons chopped garlic
2 chilies red or green or jalapenos (chopped)
2 tablespoons rosemary
1 tablespoon thyme
1 tablespoon oregano
2 tablespoons basil
1 tablespoon paprika
1/4 tablespoon cayenne
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Juice of 2 lemons
14 pieces shrimp, 16/20 count, skins on

In a saute pan, heat up butter and peanut oil. Chop garlic and saute 1 to 2 minutes. Chop chilies and some of the herbs, chopped and whole, paprika, and cayenne all to the pan. Add lemon juice and unpeeled shrimp to the pan. Saute until shrimp are cooked through.

Mardi Gras Recipes



Bread Pudding

7 slices of bread (broken in small pieces)
1 stick melted butter
8 eggs
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 can evaporated milk
1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl. Pour into glass pan and place pan in larger pan filled with 1" of water. Place both pans in oven. Bake at 350 degrees for about 1 hour.

Sauce for Bread Pudding

1 box powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon rum flavoring
1 1/2 sticks melted butter
Milk (added to make sauce thin)

Mix sugar, vanilla, rum and melted butter well. Add milk as needed. Serve over hot bread pudding.



Praline Candy

4 cups sugar
2 cans of Carnation evaporated milk
1 stick butter
2 teaspoons vanilla
Large bag of pecans (whole or halved)

Put 1 cup of water in freezer. This will be used to test candy mixture.

Combine in sauce pan sugar, milk and vanilla. Cook for 15 minutes on medium heat. Bring to a boil. Add butter. Keep stirring as mixture will boil over. After 45 minutes of cook time, drop some of the mixture in the test water from the freezer. If it forms a ball, candy is ready.

Add pecans and stir to coat. Butter counter or large cookie sheet to pour candy into. Spread evenly; let cool. Cut or break into pieces.

Mardi Gras Recipes



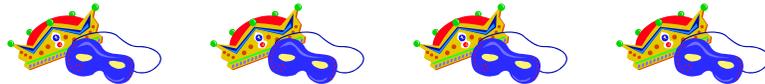
Cajun Dirty Rice

1 pound ground beef
1 pound beef sausage
1 (8 ounce) package dirty rice mix
1 (10 ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chile peppers
1 onion, finely diced
2 (15 ounce) cans kidney beans, drained
2 cups water
Salt and pepper to taste

In a skillet, brown the sausage, onion and ground beef; drain.

In a 2 quart saucepan, combine rice mix and 2 cups water. Add diced tomatoes and chilies. Stir in the kidney beans. Bring to a boil, then add meat mixture. Bring back to a boil; reduce heat and cover, stirring occasionally. Cook for 20 minutes.

Serves 8.



Red Beans and Rice

1 (14 ounce) package boil in bag rice
1 1/2 pounds ground beef
2 (15 ounce) cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 (24 ounce) jar picante sauce
1 1/2 tablespoons paprika
1 tablespoon chili powder
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
12 ounces shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

Cook the rice according to package directions.

Place the ground beef in a large skillet over medium high heat. Saute for 5 to 10 minutes, or until browned and crumbly. Drain well and transfer meat to a large pot over low heat. Add the rice, beans, picante sauce, paprika, chili powder and crushed red pepper flakes. Stir well and let simmer for 20 minutes. Stir in cheese and let simmer for 10 more minutes.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.



Come to Mardi Gras!

Dare: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

**You don't have to
go to New Orleans
for Mardi Gras....**



....Mardi Gras is here!

Dare: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

